



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
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Three Birds Test Positive for West Nile Virus in North Dakota

Please note: Details about the West Nile virus-positive birds included in the news release below will be discussed at the 2 p.m. media conference call. (See dial-in instructions that follow.)

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today reported that two sentinel chickens and one blue jay in the state have tested positive for West Nile virus. The infected chickens were identified in Grand Forks and Stutsman counties, and the blue jay was identified in Cass County.

This year, the Department of Health has teamed with the United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services to establish seven sentinel chicken flocks in areas around the state. A surveillance tool for early identification of West Nile virus, the sentinel chicken flocks are tested once a week to determine if they were exposed to West Nile virus.

“The identification of these West Nile virus-positive birds indicates that North Dakotans are at risk of contracting West Nile virus infection again this year,” said Tracy Miller, M.P.H., West Nile Virus Surveillance Program manager for the Department of Health. “This finding is a reminder that everyone across the state must continue to protect themselves from mosquito bites.”

As of July 15, 2005, 23 horses have been tested at the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Fargo, with one positive horse identified. In addition, 281 samples from humans have been submitted to the Department of Health’s Division of Microbiology, all of which have tested negative for the disease.

In 2004, 20 human cases of West Nile virus and two deaths were reported to the Department of Health. In addition, West Nile infection was identified in 67 birds and two mosquito pools.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

“Everyone is at risk of developing West Nile virus infection after being bitten by an infected mosquito,” Miller said. “However, the elderly and others who have weakened immune systems are at greater risk of developing serious complications from the disease.”

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes, the state health department recommends the following protective measures:

- Use insect repellents with active ingredients that are registered with the Environmental Protection Agency – such as DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or permethrin – and apply according to manufacture’s instructions.
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite.
- Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (such as buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths).
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed.

For additional information about West Nile virus, visit the health department’s West Nile virus website at www.ndwnv.com or contact Tracy Miller, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

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Department of Health Schedules Media Conference Call

BISMARCK, N.D. – To answer media questions about the report of West Nile virus-positive birds in North Dakota, the North Dakota Department of Health will hold a telephone media availability Tuesday, July 19, 2005, at 2 p.m. The following officials will participate in the 2 p.m. conference call:

- Tracy Miller, West Nile Virus Surveillance Program manager, North Dakota Department of Health
- Mike Trythall, virology and immunology supervisor, North Dakota Department of Health
- Ryan Powers, wildlife disease biologist, United States Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services
- Todd Hanson, supervisor, Grand Forks Mosquito Control Program, Grand Forks, N.D.
- Steve Reidburn, vector control officer, Vector Control Department, Jamestown, N.D.
- Brady Scribner, environmental health practitioner, Fargo Cass Public Health, Fargo, N.D.

To connect to the conference call, the media is asked to dial 866.637.9769. If you have trouble connecting, call the Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2378.

Members of the media who wish to attend in person can meet at 2 p.m. in the Harvest Room on the ground floor of the State Capitol Building, Bismarck, N.D.

A news release will be distributed prior to the conference call. For more information about the conference call, contact Loreeta Leer Frank or Stacy Eberl at 701.328.2372.

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To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.